

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-05 IO-13 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /091 W
-----037574 100759Z /12

R 091746Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1663
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6725

ARA FOR MCNEIL

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, CI, PFOR, SP, CI
SUBJ: PSOE'S LEOPOLDO TORRES ON CHILEAN SITUATION

REF: SANTIAGO 7241

1. PSOE NOTABLE LEOPOLDO TORRES, WHO ACCOMPLANIED PARTY
SECGEN FELIPE GONZALEZ ON HIS RECENT THREE-DAY VISIT TO
CHILE (REFTEL), MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS TO EMBOFF
DURING BRIEF AUGUST 9 CONVERSATION. TORRES IS A VERY
SERIOUS AND RESPECTED YOUNG SPANISH LAWYER/POLITICIAN;
HOWEVER, THESE REMARKS ARE OFFERED WITH THE OBVIOUS CAVEAT
THAT HE IS HARDLY AN OBJECTIVE OBSERVER OF THE CHILEAN
SCENE.

2. TORRES, WHO VISITED SANTIAGO WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS
DELEGATION IN OCTOBER 1973, SAID THE CHILEAN SITUATION HAD
CHANGED FUNDAMENTALLY SINCE THAT TIME, AND HE COMPARED
THE CONDITION OF THE PINOCHET GOVERNMENT WITH "THE STATE
OF DECOMPOSITION OF THE FRANCO REGIME IN 1973."
THE REGIME WAS SCARCELY LESS REPRESSIVE IN REAL TERMS NOW THAN
IT HAD BEEN SHORTLY AFTER THE COUP; THE NUMBER OF
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"DESAPARECIDOS" TESTIFIES TO THAT, HE SAID. REPRESSION
OF OVERT DISSIDENCE APPEARS TO HAVE DECREASED BECAUSE
THE REGIME HAS EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATED, ONEWAY OR
ANOTHER, THE MOST AUDIBLE DISSIDENTS. BUT IT IS THE
GRAVELY DETERIORATED ECONOMY WHICH HAS UNDERMINED THE
POSITION OF THE REGIME, TO THE EXTENT THAT THE BULK
OF THE MIDDLE CLASS HAS NOW FALLEN AWAY FROM IT.

3. THE SOLUTION MOST TALKED ABOUT, TORRES CONTINUED, IS FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO ENTER A GOVERNMENT WITH "MILITARES NO QUEMADOS" IN ORDER TO "REINSTITUTIONALIZE" THE COUNTRY AND CALL ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO TORRES, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS APPEAR WILLING TO DO THIS, BUT THE NECESSARY UNCOMPROMISED MILITARY OFFICERS ARE RELUCTANT FOR FEAR OF REPRISALS IF THE POLITICAL LID IS LIFTED. THE PROBLEM IS TO CONVINCE ALL CONCERNED OF THE NECESSITY OF A POLICY OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION A LA ESPANOLA. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE ADDED, THE SPANISH DEMOCRATIZATION EXPERIENCE HAD DEEPLY INFLUENCED THE THINKING OF THOSE WITH WHOM HE SPOKE.

4. "UNIDAD POPULAR" IS DESTROYED WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND TERRIBLY DIVIDED OUTSIDE IT. PART OF THE AGREEMENT ON A CD-MILITARY GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, TULD INVOLVE THE AUTO-EXCLUSION OF THE COMMUNISTS FOR FIVE YEARS OR SO (HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY WOULD ACQUIESCE IN THIS) AND REQUIRE THAT THE MORE CONTROVERSIAL SOCIALISTS, LIKE ALTAMIRANO, STAY AWAY. IN TORRES' VIEW -- AND HE SAID THIS REFLECTED THINKING IN SANTIAGO -- A FAIRLY RAPID MOVE TOWARD LIBERALIZATION WOULD BE NECESSARY TO PREVENT EVEN WORSE POLITICAL POLARIZATION THAN WAS ALREADY THE CASE. THERE WAS CURRENTLY NO POSSIBILITY OF MASSIVE ANTI-GOVERNMENT

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MOBILIZATIONS, BUT WITH THE ECONOMY DECOMPOSING AS IT IS, TORRES BELIEVED THE SITUATION COULD BECOME VOLATILE IN A MATTER OF MONTHS.

5. TURNING TO POLITICAL PRISONERS SCHNAKE AND LAZO, TORRES SAID GONZALEZ WOULD SEE WHAT HE COULD DO TO BRING ABOUT THE EXCHANGE OF THE TWO FOR CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS MATOS. HE CAUTIONED, HOWEVER, THAT GONZALEZ OBVIOUSLY HAD NO LEVERAGE ON CASTRO.

6. ACCORDING TO TORRES, ALL THE OPPOSITIONISTS WITH WHOM HE TALKED VIEWED THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS THUS FAR POSITIVELY, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH PINOCHET IN WASHINGTON DURING THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY-SIGNING EVENTS, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID DURING THE INTERVIEW. IN THEIR VIEW, TORRES CONTINUED, THE USG MUST KEEP UP THE PRESSURE AND PREFERABLY INTENSIFY IT. HE OFFERED NO SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS, HOWEVER, AND SPOKE VAGUELY OF "MORAL PRESSURE AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MEASURES." HE THEN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ECONOMIC MEASURES WOULD HAVE TO BE THOUGHT THROUGH

CLEARLY IN ORDER TO AVIOD THEIR BEING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE,
GIVEN THE STRAITS IN WHICH THE CHILEAN ECONOMY FINDS
ITSELF AND THE FACT THAT MANY CHILEANS ARE ALREADY
GOING HUNGRY.

7. TORRES CONCLUDED THAT THE REGIME AT NO TIME HAD
OBSTRUCTED HIS AND GONZALEZ' MOVEMENT ABOUT SANTIAGO,
AND HE HAD PARTICULAR PRAISE FOR THE "GOOD WORK" OF
CARDINAL SILVA IN SANTIAGO.EATON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MADRID06725
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770328-0648
Format: TEL
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770981/aaaacqqrw.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 894f9849-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SANTIAGO 7241
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1334545
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PSOE\ S LEOPOLDO TORRES ON CHILEAN SITUATION
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CI, SP, (TORRES, LEOPOLDO), (GONZALEZ, FELIPE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/894f9849-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009